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# UPDATED FINAL YEAR DATA AND REPORTING PLAN

IMPACT EVALUATION OF MACEDONIA SMALL BUSINESS  
EXPANSION PROJECT

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# UPDATED FINAL YEAR DATA AND REPORTING PLAN

## IMPACT EVALUATION OF MACEDONIA SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT



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Performance Evaluation of YES Network and Impact Evaluation of Small Business Expansion and Civil Society Projects in Macedonia

### **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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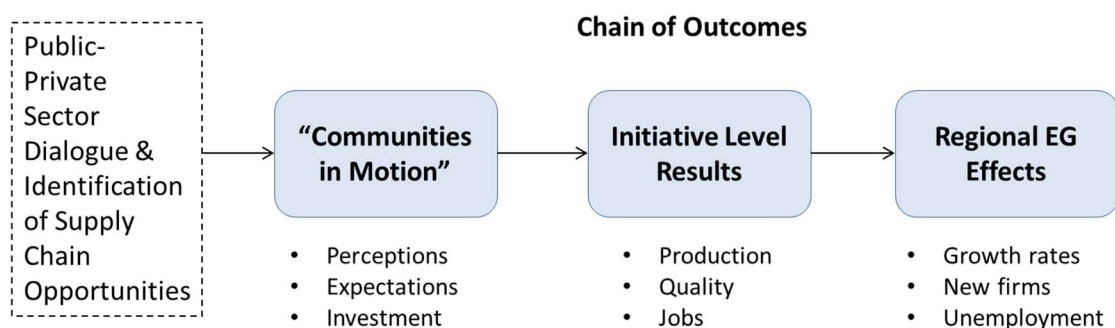
## Purpose of this Report

This report focuses on plans for the completion of an impact evaluation, with supplementary performance evaluation features, for USAID/Macedonia's Small Business Expansion Project (SBEP), initiated in 2012 and scheduled for completion in 2016. The evaluation of this project is being carried out by Management Systems International (MSI) under Task Order AID-I65-M-13-00001.

## Background and Baseline Data Collection

The impact evaluation, which was initiated in May 2014, was designed to determine the effect of a specific SBEP agricultural intervention: the Grow More Corn Initiative. The design process and baseline study for this evaluation determined that an adequate number of treatment cases and a counterfactual comparison group appeared to be of sufficient size to conduct a rigorous analysis with respect to this intervention's impact.

To complement this study, which is an explicit instance of USAID's broader theory of change for SBEP as shown in the figure below, the evaluation team collected baseline data not only on farmers growing corn but also on: farmers who grew other crops for which SBEP expected to provide assistance; small businesses in the agribusiness sector that were part of SBEP's business/light industry target population; and regional as well as selected municipal economic development planning entities in Macedonia.



Baseline data on this range of intended SBEP beneficiaries were collected through surveys and semi-structured group interviews carried out by GfK Skopje, a survey research firm subcontracted by MSI. The surveys and group interviews were carried out in April-May 2014, and a baseline data report was provided to USAID on July 7, 2014. In addition, the study team conducted a series of regional development center (RDC) interviews in Macedonia in July 2013, which also gathered relevant national, regional, and municipal data from the country's State Statistical Office. A follow-up Interim Evaluation Report, which integrated regional interview data and secondary source information, was delivered to USAID on July 31, 2014.

## Implementation Fidelity Monitoring

During the remainder of 2014 and throughout 2015, the evaluation team monitored developments under SBEP through quarterly reports and interviews, and tracked economic and political developments in the country to ascertain whether and to what degree project implementation as well as assumptions made by the evaluation team were in line with expectations. An Implementation Fidelity Monitoring Report was provided to USAID on December 30, 2015.

In this Implementation Fidelity Monitoring Report, four findings emerged that have direct bearing on the way in which the evaluation team will organize and carry out the last phase of this evaluation in 2016. These include:

- Two of the crop production assistance activities for which baseline data were collected – tomato and wheat – have been scaled back by SBEP and are no longer being pursued. The value of collecting endline data for these farmers is thus uncertain.
- Reports from the SBEP team indicate that a reasonably large number of farmers in the areas where SBEP has provided drip irrigation and protocols have adopted these practices and are using them on hectares not covered in SBEP's initial Grow More Corn Initiative implementation plan. Some of these are treatment group farmers, and others are farmers who were aware of what was being done of SBEP-assisted farms and invested in replicating the SBEP intervention on their own farms. Under the impact evaluation design, some of these “adopting” farmers were in the study’s comparison group, and their change in status affects planning for the endline study. In addition, while the baseline study captured data on some non-treatment farmers in the areas in which SBEP provided the corn intervention assistance, the number of non-treatment farmers was probably not large enough to accurately estimate, at the endline, just how large the project’s “spread effect” has been. This too has implications for how the endline research might best be conducted.
- The range of small businesses/light industry beneficiaries of SBEP assistance, including women-owned firms, includes many enterprises outside the agribusiness sub-sector for which the evaluation team collected baseline data. This raises a question about the value of conducting an originally planned endline survey of enterprises in the agribusiness sub-sector, as some other option may be more appropriate.
- At the time of the baseline study, two regions (Polog and Pelagonia), and municipalities within them, were considered SBEP target regions. Since then, the project’s assistance area has incorporated two other regions: Vardar and Northeast. Baseline data collection anticipated that additional regions would be added, and thus data were collected from farmers and firms in all regions except Skopje, and as well as from RDCs in all of the same regions. The chances, however, that the farmers from which baseline data were collected are the same farmers who were later assisted by SBEP are slim. Therefore, while there are baseline data for these new regions, it will not be for the exact same farmers at the endline point, as will be the case for Polog and Pelagonia. MSI also notes in this regard that an opportunity emerged during the 2015 planting season, when SBEP knew which farmers it would be helping in Vadar and Northeast, for baseline data

collection from those farmers, but this opportunity was not taken as it was not in the original study budget and SBEP itself interviewed the farmers it intended to assist around the same time.

- There will be an election, currently scheduled for April 24, 2016, which needs to be considered in planning for final year data collection.

The following section discusses MSI's current plans for data collection during 2016 based on the implementation fidelity monitoring findings, as well as for the completion of the final evaluation report.

## Endline Data Collection and Final Report

The most recent modification to the contract under which the SBEP impact evaluation is being conducted identified four remaining deliverables, as shown in the table below. It is MSI's expectation that all of these deliverables will be provided on or around the dates identified in the modification.

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Estimated Date</b>
End-line Data Report for SBEP impact evaluation	o/a 8/15/2016
Draft Evaluation Report for SBEP impact evaluation	o/a 9/5/2016
Oral Presentation for SBEP impact evaluation	o/a 9/9/2016
Final Evaluation Report for SBEP impact evaluation	o/a 9/26/2016

In the SBEP evaluation design that USAID approved in 2014, it was anticipated that endline data would be collected following essentially the same plan as was used to collect baseline data. For a number of aspects of the baseline data collection approach, repeating the process still seems to be appropriate. This includes:

- A survey of farmers that captures data on corn production, including the type of irrigation used and farmers' estimates of corn production and sales. During the endline, the same farmers would be approached as in the baseline. In addition, farmers assisted by SBEP after the baseline period would be surveyed, although their data would be kept separate from data for farmers from whom the evaluation team obtained both baseline and endline data.
- Conducting group interviews with municipal leaders, from both the public and private sectors, in the same municipalities as were sampled in the baseline period, and to the degree possible, the same individuals.
- Similarly, a repeat round of interviews with RDC staff, to complement the baseline round.

One aspect of the original data collection process, the survey of agribusinesses, warrants further consideration and discussion with USAID as it does not capture all types of businesses that SBEP has helped, and given the breadth of the types of firms that SBEP actually assisted, it may capture information on very few businesses with which SBEP was in contact.

As the evaluation team considers options with respect to the evaluation's coverage of businesses assisted by SBEP, including interviewing a sample of those SBEP was known to have assisted, other options are also being reviewed and structured for presentation to and discussion with USAID in early 2016, including:

- Increasing the intensity of farmer interviews to capture information on the “spread effect” of SBEP’s work in its main target areas. This could involve drawing concentric circles on a map around the original sites in Polog and Pelagonia where the Grow More Corn Initiative was concentrated. In each circle, an additional set of farmers would be randomly selected and interviewed about their awareness and uptake of the SBEP corn intervention practices, with the greatest density of these new interviews being in the circle closest to the treatment farmers, and successively less dense in wider circles away from the treatment area.
- Rounding out the overall evaluation’s understanding of SBEP effects by conducting “post only” interviews on aspects of the project that have grown considerably but were not focus areas at the baseline stage. Additional interviews of this type would focus on forest products, women’s entrepreneurship, and Adventure Travel. If added, these would be part of the evaluation that operates closer to a performance evaluation model than to one that rigorously measures impact. The value of such interviews would come in what they reveal about the effects of SBEP at the regional level overall, rather than about specific interventions.

The evaluation team’s schedule for 2016 assumes the following:

- January – further review of options, baseline instruments, and baseline data, to identify any data collection changes that might be warranted
- February – scheduling for endline survey and group interviews, and pre-testing any changes in instruments
- March – commencing endline survey and group interviews in a timely manner before the national elections
- April-May – initial processing of endline survey and group interview data
- June – interviews with RDCs and municipalities, repeating the baseline set
- June-July – in-country evaluation team analysis of the baseline and endline data and production of the Endline Data Report. Based on the baseline round, it is clear that the evaluation team would benefit from additional time between the production of this report and completion of the Draft Evaluation Report
- August – preparation of the Draft Evaluation Report
- September – delivery of the Draft Evaluation Report, oral presentation to USAID/Macedonia and its invitees, and preparation of the Final Evaluation Report

As indicated above, MSI will discuss options identified in the report with USAID in early 2016 and following those discussions and selections among options, a more detailed Gantt Chart will be prepared for the final year tasks under this evaluation.